

Becoming a Detective: Historical Case File #5—Prisoners and Hunger Strikes

At the request of the textbook committee your class has been asked to investigate whether Hazel Hunkins deserves to be included in the next edition of the textbook. This case cannot be solved without an understanding of the National Woman's Party's decision to commit civil disobedience, their demands to be treated as political prisoners, and the attention their imprisonment brought to the cause. As a member of the commission selected to review the case, your job is to examine the following documents to better understand the why these women decided to break the law and what affect their actions had.

Why did suffrage prisoners consider themselves to be political prisoners? Do you agree with their claim?

How effective was this tactic?

Step 1: Review Background Information

The National Woman's Party (NWP) introduced tactics to the American woman's suffrage movement that were inspired by its leaders' experiences with the militant wing of the British suffrage movement. According to historian Robert Cooney, "The movement's many nonviolent strategies deserve closer inspection particularly because they repeatedly offered suffragists the way out of strategic binds, dead ends, discouragements and immobility." (From Cooney, Robert. "Enduring Significance of the American Woman Suffrage Movement." Women's Studies Database Reading Room, n.d. Web. 02 Sept. 2015. <http://mith.umd.edu/WomensStudies/ReadingRoom/History/Vote/enduring-significance.html>.)

Among the NWP's non-violent tactics was braving arrest and imprisonment. Although they were ostensibly sentenced for "obstructing traffic," the suffragists viewed themselves as political prisoners, unjustly incarcerated

for peacefully exercising their right to petition their government. Because they believed themselves to be political prisoners, the women refused to cooperate with their jailors. According to an article published on the website American Memory, the imprisoned women were "sometimes beaten (most notably during the November 15 "Night of Terror" at Occoquan Workhouse), and often brutally force-fed when they went on hunger strikes to protest being denied political prisoner status. Women of all classes risked their health, jobs, and reputations by continuing their protests. One historian estimated that approximately 2,000 women spent time on the picket lines between 1917 and 1919, and that 500 women were arrested, of whom 168 were actually jailed. The NWP made heroes of the suffrage prisoners, held ceremonies in their honor, and presented them with commemorative pins. Women went on publicity tours dressed in prison garb and talked about their experiences in prison in order to win public support for their cause." (From Library of Congress American Memory, "Historical Overview of the National Woman's Party," Web. 4 Sept. 2015. <http://www.loc.gov/collections/static/women-of-protest/images/history.pdf>)

Step 2: Investigate the Evidence

Expect to spend about ten minutes on each of the sources in your packet, available online at <http://mhs.mt.gov/education/women/HazelHunkins>.

Exhibit 5-A Photograph: "Miss [Lucy] Burns in Occoquan Workhouse, Washington," National Woman's Party Records, Group II, Container II:274, Folder: Individual Photographs Nos. 18-70 "B," Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. <http://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000011>

Exhibit 5-B Newspaper article: " 'Suff' Pickets Go to Hospital," *Washington Herald*, August 31, 1917

Exhibit 4-C Hand-written letter: Hazel Hunkins to the *Montana Socialist* newspaper, Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan Papers, MC 532, box 61, folder 9, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute

Exhibit 5-D Telegrams: Hazel to Mrs. E. L. Perkins, August 15, 1918, and Hazel to Mrs. E. L. Hunkins, August 21, 1918, Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan Papers, MC 532, box 61, folder 9, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute

Exhibit 5-E Newspaper article: “Twenty-six Suffragists Get Tribute,” *Washington Herald*, December 15, 1918

For each source, answer all the questions on the Document Analysis Worksheet. **Note: You will be sharing these answers with your class in an “exhibit” format—so write legibly!**

Step 3: Search for Clues

1. Why did suffrage prisoners consider themselves to be political prisoners? Do you agree with this description for them?
2. In her letter to the *Montana Socialist*, Hazel Hunkins makes a point of stating that the suffrage picketers are serving their sentences “with the worst negro element of this country.” Why do you think she does this?
3. Why do you think the suffragists held a meeting honoring the women who went to jail for the cause? What purpose did this meeting serve politically?
4. Did you find any instances when the documents contradicted one another? If so, describe them. Which account do you think is more accurate? Why?

Step 4: Crack the Case

Based on your analysis of the documents and citing evidence to support your answer, please create a presentation to share with the other members of the textbook committee (your class).

You may use technology if you wish. Your presentation should answer the following questions:

1. Why did the suffragists claim to be political prisoners?
2. Did their arrests and imprisonment advance the cause of suffrage? If so, how? If not, what effect do you think they had?
3. Whose perspective was not represented in the material you read? How might other perspectives change your analysis?
4. How does the material you analyzed relate to Hazel Hunkins and the committee’s larger question: whether she should be included in the next edition of the textbook?

Make sure to include in your report:

- Specific examples! Quote from the documents.
- Information about where and how the documents contradicted each other (if this occurred) and how you decided which ones to trust.
- A list of any additional questions you still have that were left unanswered through your investigation.

After your presentation is complete, organize your material into an “exhibit” so your fellow committee members can easily access your evidence when creating their briefs. Your exhibit must include your answers to the following questions:

- What is the source called?
- Who created it?
- When was it created? How soon after the event it describes?
- Who was the audience for this document?
- Why was it created?
- Did you find evidence of bias or point of view? If so, what?
- How do these factors affect the source’s credibility?

Historical Case File #5—Prisoners and Hunger Strikes



Exhibit 5-A “Miss [Lucy] Burns in Occoquan Workhouse.” National Woman’s Party Records, Group II, Container II:274, Folder: Individual Photographs Nos. 18-70 “B,” Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Additional information: This image was likely taken at Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia in November 1917. Lucy Burns, of New York City, who with Alice Paul established the first permanent headquarters for suffrage work in Washington, D.C., helped organize the suffrage parade of March 3, 1913, and was one of the editors of *The Suffragist*. Leader of most of the picket demonstrations, she served more time in jail than any other suffragist in America. She was arrested for picketing in June 1917 and sentenced to 3 days; arrested Sept. 1917, sentenced to 60 days; arrested Nov. 10, 1917, sentenced to 6 months; in Jan. 1919 arrested at watchfire demonstrations, for which she served one 3-day and two 5-day sentences. She also served 4 prison terms in England. Burns was one of the speakers on the “Prison Special” tour of Feb.-March 1919. Source: Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 356.

“SUFF” PICKETS GO TO HOSPITAL

Four Occoquan Prisoners Are Weak from Eating Rough Food.

Four of the six women pickets confined at the Occoquan workhouse have been placed in the hospital because of weakened condition.

The women have been unable to eat the prison food and the hardship of confinement has reduced them to the point where their health is threatened. In the hospital they will be given special food and medical treatment.

The women in the hospital are Mrs. William Upton Watson and Miss Lucy Ewing, of Chicago; Miss Lavinia Dock, of Pennsylvania, and Miss Natalie Gray, of Colorado.

Miss Burns Files Papers.

Alleged abuses at the Occoquan workhouse were yesterday reduced to charges when Miss Lucy Burns, of Cameron House, filed a complaint with District Commissioner Brownlow about the treatment received by the six pickets who are serving sentences of thirty days at the institution.

Miss Burns was accompanied to the District Building by Mrs. Abby Scott Baker and Miss Anne Martin. The latter furnished the surety for the pickets now out on bail.

They did not see Commissioner Brownlow, as he was out of the city, but left the following letter:

“As counsel for six women imprisoned for a month in the Occoquan workhouse, on the charge of ‘obstructing traffic,’ I visited these prisoners on August 21, 22, and 25. I found them suffering from many causes, that on public grounds, ought to be instantly remedied.

“The prisoners for whom I am counsel, gave the following report on the food served them:

In amount it is ample, but in quality often uneatable. The hominy, the chief article of the morning meal, is sour and dirty. The meat served at the midday meal is very tough and old and often tainted. The corn-bread served at dinner and supper cannot be eaten. One of the prisoners found worms in it. The soup served at dinner and supper is often very bad. As soup and corn bread are all that is served to the prisoners for supper, they have had on two occasions to my knowledge to go without supper altogether.

Cruelty Is Charged.

“Concerning the general conditions in the prison, I am inclosing with this letter affidavits of Mrs. Virginia Bovee and of Mrs. Robert Baker, who visited Occoquan on August 27. The prisoners for whom I am counsel are aware that cruel practices go on at Occoquan. On one occasion they heard Supt. Whittaker kicking a woman in the next room. They heard Mr. Whittaker’s voice, the sound of the blows and the woman’s cries.”

PICKETS IN WRECK GOING TO OCCOQUAN

Auto in Collision; Miss Burns and Mrs. Dixon Slightly Hurt.

Two of the Cameron House pickets were “roughed up” yesterday on the road to the Occoquan workhouse and whether it was the fault of the chauffeur of their machine or that of the manipulator of the auto with which they collided, will have to be decided in the courts.

Miss Lucy Burns, acting general of Cameron House, and Mrs. Dixon, mother of one of the pickets, serving a 30-day sentence at Occoquan, were in the machine when the collision occurred. They knew nothing regarding what occurred previous to the crash, but were made aware of trouble when the machine turned over on its side.

Is Your Organization Represented USE SLIP

Organization Honor Parade, Wash National Tuesday, Sept

Name of organization.....

Character of uniform.....

Number and character of units,
.....

Number to march.....

Number of bands.....

Vehicles (restricted strictly to
.....

Officer authorized to make entry
sent.....

Address

Phone No..... Business.....

Both women escaped with no serious injury apart from bruises.

Bernie Hackett, colored, chauffeur of the machine, was taken to Alexandria and held in \$50 bonds for reckless driving. Surety was furnished. The complaint was made by John S. West, of Fairfax County, Va.

MUSIC AND DANCING GIVEN BY FROLICKERS

A musical program furnished the feature of an entertainment given last night by the Frolickers at the home of

Exhibit 5-B “ ‘Suff’ Pickets Go To Hospital,” *Washington Herald*, August 31, 1917. Full page available at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1917-08-31/ed-1/seq-7.pdf>

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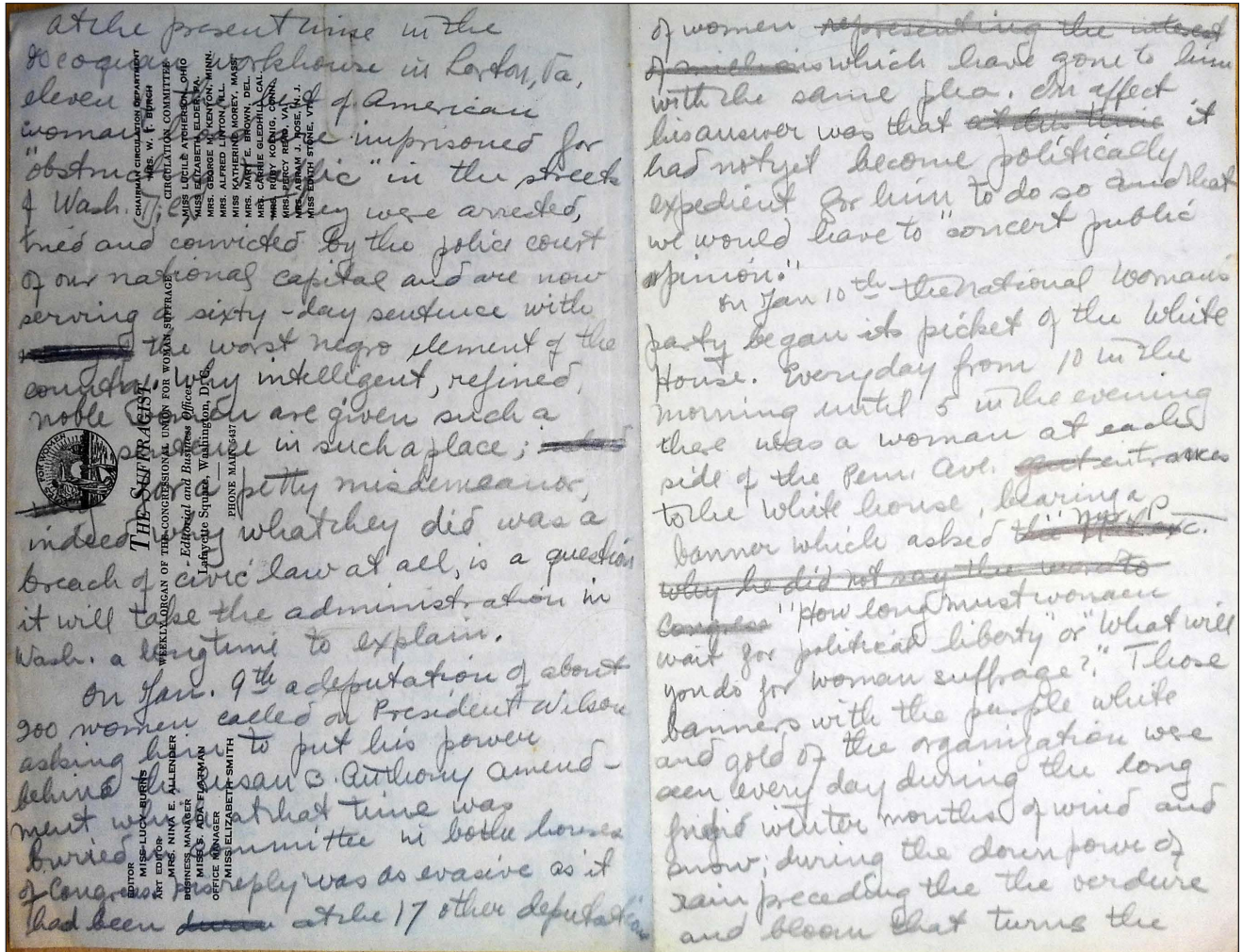


Exhibit 5-C Hazel Hunkins to the *Montana Socialist* newspaper, Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan Papers, MC 532, box 61, folder 9, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute

grounds of the national mansion
and the park of route into a veritable
fairland of blossoms during the
humid, ~~exhausting~~ heat of mid-
summer - nothing daunted
the pickets, ever reminding the
President of a duty yet evaded
and ~~calling~~ calling to the attention
of the ~~entire~~ entire nation to fact
that he had not yet acted on a
matter that his representatives
had promised ~~to~~ the women
of the west in an attempt to get
their votes last fall.

During that time Elihu Root
had been ~~sent~~ sent as an envoy
to the free Russia and had told ~~in~~
that new born still struggling
democracy that we in America had
"free, equal & universal suffrage"; on
his return to ~~the~~ the masses who lived
slutthin, our banners advertised
the fact that he had ~~received~~ received the
Russian people. We have not "free
equal & universal suffrage" when
there are 20,000,000 women yet unenfranchised
and who will have to pay.

remain so until an amend-
ment to the constitution frees
them. This banner was visited
the office of the secretary of
the president & was not termed
"disloyal" "traitorous" or "seditious" by
that office or any of the lawyers
of national repute who also saw it.
It was torn down by ~~the~~ one man,
a second banner was torn down by
2 boys, ~~not attempting~~ to the police
attempting to ~~make~~ making a
timid attempt to protect the pickets
These followed days of picketing
with the same banners which had
been used for the 5 months
preceding & the pickets were
protected by the police from ~~and boys~~
demure women, ~~and~~ mischievous
The day after the attack made
by the latter, ~~the pickets~~ were
surprised to find that our pickets
had been arrested for violation of the
peace & order act which includes
foul language & drunkenness.
Overnight there had been a
change in the policy of the police.



EDITOR
MISS LUCY BURNS
ART EDITOR
MRS. NINA E. ALLENDER
BUSINESS MANAGER
MISS S. ADA FLATMAN
OFFICE MANAGER
MISS ELIZABETH SMITH

THE SUFFRAGIST
WEEKLY ORGAN OF THE CONGRESSIONAL UNION FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE
Editorial and Business Offices
Lafayette Square, Washington, D. C.
PHONE MAIN 5437

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MISS EDITH STONE, VT.

The picketing which had been ~~headed~~ ~~lawabiding~~ ~~and peaceful~~ for 5 months was suddenly a mis-demeanor. The pickets had always been silent, inactive & non-resistant; any violence what-so-ever had come from irresponsible members of a small crowd easily handled by the efficient metropolitan police. We continued to picket and in the following week 53 of the bravest women in America had been through the mill of the police court & 30 of them had spent 3 days in the district jail.

During the present conditions existing in the U. S. due to the war, it has been ~~quite~~ more than ever impossible to get a square deal from the press of this country ~~for the~~ ^{for the} propaganda other than ~~that of the~~ ^{that of the} ~~propaganda~~ ^{propaganda}. This has been especially true of the attitude toward the suffragists in Washington who refuse to allow that reform to be drowned in the war fever.

I have been through the persecutions meted out to National Woman's Party ^{this past year} and I turn to the Montana Socialist as an organ liberal enough to help put ^{the} facts before its audience. In our struggle for a more complete democracy ~~in~~ ^{Socialist} ~~in~~ ^{suffragist} this country ~~we~~ have the same enemies - capital & the interest controlled by capital. chief

among these the press of the country which glories in giving an unfair thrust to ~~our~~ ^{most democratic} activities.

Bill, knowing that your ~~liberal~~ ^{liberal} paper has ~~no~~ ^{many} liberal readers, I wish to put before them a more accurate account and a fair interpretation of what the women who agitate suffrage at this time are trying to accomplish. To that end I am enclosing ~~an~~ ^{two} articles which I ask you to print at your earliest convenience. They are really one, but it might be more possible for you to run two shorter articles than one long one.

Enclosed is addressed envelope for the return of articles if you feel you cannot use them. Hoping to hear from you help in the matter soon.

Form 1201

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

WESTERN UNION

TELEGRAM

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a telegram. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

RECEIVED AT 19 NORTH 27TH STREET, BILLINGS, MONTANA ALWAYS OPEN

N88D TH 16

WA WASHINGTON DC 615P AUG 15 1918

MRS E L PERKINS 278

218 N 33 ST BILLINGS MONT

TWENTY SIX OF AMERICAS FINEST WOMEN ARE ACCOMPANYING ME TO JAIL
ITS SPLENDID DONT WORRY LOVE

HAZEL

950P

Form 1201

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

WESTERN UNION

TELEGRAM

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
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If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a telegram. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

RECEIVED AT 19 NORTH 27TH STREET, BILLINGS, MONTANA ALWAYS OPEN

1918 AUG 21 PM 8 48

1476 UN 64 BLUE

WA WASHINGTON DC 1053 P 21

MRS E L HUNKINS 288

218 NORTH 33 RD ST BILLINGS MONT

TWENTY OF US HUNGER STRUCK OUR WAY OUT OF PRISON LAST NIGHT WE
FACED DOWN THE ADMINISTRATION ON EVERY POINT AND WON OUT AT LAST
AM LITTLE WEAK AND SOMEWHAT POISONED BY BAD WATER BUT FEELING
FINE AND EXPECT TO GET TOO FAT AS RESULT EVERYTHING IS SPLENDID
DONT WORRY AM GOING TO NEWENGLAND ON LABOR BOARD INVESTIGATION
AS SOON AS AM ABLE LOVE

HAZEL.

Exhibit 5-D Hazel to Mrs. E. L. Perkins, August 15, 1918, and Hazel to Mrs. E. L. Hunkins, August 21, 1918, Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan Papers, MC 532, box 61, folder 9, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute

26 SUFFRAGISTS TO GET TRIBUTE

Women Prisoners Will Be Decorated with Service Pins Today.

Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, of New York, who is attending the three-day conference of the National Woman's Party, will preside at the mass meeting in the National Theater at 3 o'clock this afternoon, and act as hostess at a reception to be given at the national headquarters this evening.

The mass meeting is held as a protest against the failure of the Senate to pass the suffrage amendment.

To contrast American women, who were the first to demand political freedom, with the enfranchised women of other nations, the twenty-six suffragists who have been put into prison during the present year for demanding political freedom for the women in the country, will be



—Edmonston Photo.

Mrs. O. H. P. BELMONT.

escorted to the stage by representatives of the freed women of other countries dressed in national costume.

A medley of their national airs will be played as the foreign women, carrying the banners of their countries, come forward, while the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" will be the accompaniment for the American prisoners, who will carry the tri-colors, purple, white and gold, representing the struggle for women's freedom. Mrs. Toscan Bennett, of Hartford, Conn., will pay tribute to those who have suffered imprisonment for liberty, and will present them with prison pins, duplicates in miniature of the cell doors, as insignia of their service.

List of Prisoners.

This year's suffrage prisoners are Dr. Sara Lockrey, of Philadelphia; Mrs. W. D. Ascough, Mrs. George L. Koenig and Miss Edna Purtell, of Hartford, Conn.; Mrs. Lawrence Lewis, of Philadelphia; Miss Alice Paul, chairman of the National Woman's Party; Mrs. Agnes Chase, Miss Katherine Fisher and Mrs. Margaret Oakes, of Washington; Miss Clara Wold, of Portland, Ore.; Miss Hazel Hunkins, of Billings, Mont.; Mrs. Helena Hill Weed and Miss Elsie Hill, daughters of the late Representative Hill, of Connecticut; Mrs. Effie Main, of Topeka; Miss Mary Winsor, of Haverford, Pa.; Miss Kate Heffelfinger, of Shamokin, Pa.; Miss Gertrude Crocker, of Chicago; Mrs. Irving Gross, of Boston; Miss Lavinia Dock, of Fayetteville, Pa.; Miss Alice Kimball, of New York; Mrs. Annie Arnell, of Wilmington; Miss Edith Ainge, of Jamestown, N. Y.; Miss Lucy Burns, of Brooklyn; Miss Gladys Greiner, Miss Julia Emory and Dr. Anna Kuhn, of Baltimore.

Mrs. Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of the pioneer suffragist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Miss Maud Younger, lobby chairman of the National Woman's Party, will speak on the present critical position of the suffrage amendment. Mme. Jane Osborne Hanna will sing the women's Marseillaise, written by Miss Hazel MacKaye.

Will Occupy Boxes.

Mrs. Champ Clark, Mrs. Charles Boughton Wood, of Washington and Connecticut, and Mrs. Abram Van Winkle, of New Jersey, will be among those occupying boxes. Mrs. Lawrence Lewis, of Philadelphia, is in charge of the mass meeting and Mrs. Jessie Hardy MacKaye of the decoration of the theater.

Miss Adeline Kent, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Kent, is in charge of the ushers, who will include the Misses Margaret Sutherland, Janet Howard, Betty Shaw and Betty O'Brien.

The mass meeting today will be followed by a reception at the party headquarters in Lafayette Square this evening at which the hostesses, in addition to Mrs. Belmont, will be Mrs. Henry Atwater, District chairman, Mrs. William B. Thompson, Mrs. Richard Wainwright, Mrs. John Jay White, Mrs. Harvey Wiley, Mrs. S. M. B. Young, Mrs. Hornsby Evans, Mrs. Lawrence Darr, Miss Anne George, Mrs. William Kent, Mrs. Harriet McCutcheon, Mrs. Arthur Ramsay, and Mrs. A. D. Rottanzi.